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Newsmax

Mont. AG Knudsen to Newsmax: State TikTok Ban First of Its Kind

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By: Fran Beyer

Montana GOP Attorney General Austin Knudsen on Monday said legislation awaiting gubernatorial approval is a chance for the state to be a leader in "pushing back" on China spying.

Knudsen told Newsmax's "National Report" that GOP Gov. Greg Gianforte, by signing the measure into law, has a powerful chance to put Montana on "the cutting edge."

"Montana's got the opportunity here," Knudsen said, "pushing back against the Chinese communist government, because that's what this is about. This is about China spying on Montanans."

"This is about an app that they perniciously used to collect intel and collect data to scan everything else that you have on your phone — because that's what they're doing with TikTok. So, I'm hopeful that the governor will do the right thing."

Montana became the first state to approve a bill banning the popular video-streaming app, [sending the bill](#) Friday to Gianforte.

The bill makes it illegal to download TikTok in the state, with penalties of up to \$10,000 a day for any entity, like Apple and Google's app stores or TikTok itself, that makes the app available. If enacted, the state ban would begin in January 2024.

Knudsen told Newsmax the state "absolutely can" enforce the measure and it will "go after the company itself" and "anybody that allows it to be downloaded," including Google or Apple.

"My office largely drafted this bill, and [enforcement] is something that we considered — almost at the outset," Knudsen said. "If you've got TikTok downloaded on your phone or on your device in Montana as a citizen, we're not coming after you. That's specifically in the law."

"This is to go after the company itself, TikTok, and anybody that allows it to be downloaded. So we'd be looking at Apple and Google, specifically. And there's a \$10,000 per day civil penalty. That's our enforcement mechanism right there."

He said the process would go through the Department of Justice in Montana and its Office of Consumer Protection.

"We'd be looking at enforcing civil penalties on both TikTok and/or Google and Apple for allowing them to be downloaded in the state of Montana," he said.

A federal court challenge from TikTok is [reportedly](#) expected and the issue could wind up in front of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Last month, TikTok Chief Executive Shou Zi Chew faced [sharp-edged questions](#) from lawmakers in Washington, as he tried to calm bipartisan fears about the social media app.

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